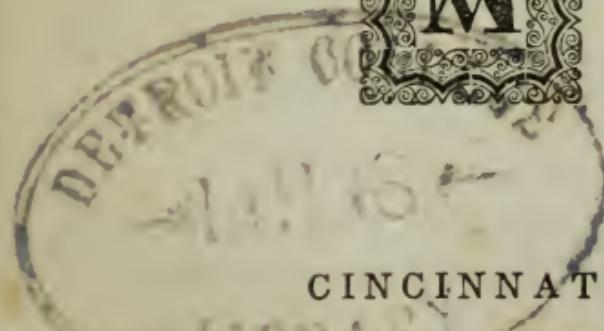


MEMENTO
OF
FIRST COMMUNION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.



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MEMENTO
OF
FIRST COMMUNION.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INEFFABLE HAPPINESS OF A CHILD
WHO MAKES HIS FIRST COMMUNION.

“ What happiness can equal mine?
I've found the object of my love;
My Jesus dear, my King divine,
Is come to me from heav'n above.
He chose my heart for his abode,
He there becomes my daily bread;
There, in me flows his healing blood,
There, with his flesh, my soul is fed.”

“ I am my love's and he is mine;
In me he dwells, in him I live;
What greater treasure could I find?
And could ye, heavens! a greater give?
O sacred banquet! heavenly feast!
O overflowing source of grace!
Where God the food, and man the guest,
Meet and unite in sweet embrace.”

“ Ye Angels! lend your heav’ly tongues,
Come, and with me in praises join;
Come, and unite in thankful songs,
Your sweet, immortal voice to mine.
O! that I had your burning hearts
To love my God, my spouse, most dear!
O! that he would with flaming darts,
Raise in my heart a heavenly fire!

“ Dear Jesus! now my heart is thine;
O! may it from thee never fly;
Hold it with chains of love divine,
Make it be thine eternally.
Vain objects! that seduced my soul,
I now despise your fleeting charms;
In vain temptation’s billows roll,
I lie secure in Jesus’ arms.”

Songs of joy, light transports and sweet tears fail to express one half the happiness which you experience to-day, my dear children, indeed had you the tongues of angels you could not tell the ineffable joy which you feel. Is it not true that the Lord is the God of pure hearts, the tender friend of children? Is it not true that he is always near those who invoke him, that he is easily found by those who seek him, and that he overwhelms with delights all young and innocent souls who come to him with love, confidence and simplicity?

When the father of a family dies his children assemble; they open the parental

testament and each one takes possession of his part of the wealth of the deceased; to one is given a tract of land, to another a house, and to a third a sum of money which becomes his share. Children of the Saviour! you have been called upon to share your inheritance, and of what is it composed? Not of perishable gifts; not of houses of wood and stone; not of pieces of money which robbers can carry off; but of what? of gifts of an infinitely superior order; gifts which enrich the soul, and render it happy during time and in eternity. These gifts are faith, hope, charity, peace of heart and a distaste of all that is perishable and mortal; it is more, it is God himself. Yes, my dear children, God himself has become your inheritance in the holy communion; he really gives himself to you; he places himself at your disposal entirely and without reserve. Now when we possess God himself, what more can we desire? Listen to me: forty days after the birth of our Saviour when Joseph and Mary carried him to the temple of Jerusalem after the prescribed custom of the law, a holy and venerable man, Simeon, guided by the Spirit of God came to the temple at the same moment. At sight of the infant Saviour he begged the signal favour of receiving him

in his arms, and on returning the child to his mother he entoned this beautiful canticle: "Now dismiss thy servant O Lord ! according to thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen the Redeemer of the world, my arms have held him and I have pressed him to my heart." More happy than Simeon, you, my dear children, possess this divine Saviour in your heart ; in order to make some slight return for so great a blessing you should take the resolution of living for him alone, or rather resolve, that you will live no longer but that he may live in you. It is he who should dictate all your thoughts, inspire all your sentiments and direct all your ways. His design in prolonging your existence is to render more and more perfect the union which you have contracted with him ; then you should each day increase in wisdom, piety, obedience, mildness, humility and charity, that is to say in all that can render you more like him. Behold henceforth the only end of life. O my God ! give me a high idea of the honor which you have conferred upon me in my first communion.

O Mary ! my good mother, since I so much resemble you in receiving Jesus Christ in my heart, obtain for me the grace to resemble you by tender love and constant fidelity.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT CHILDREN WHO HAVE MADE THEIR FIRST COMMUNION HAVE TO FEAR, FIRST ON THE PART OF THE DEVIL, SECONDLY ON THE PART OF THE WORLD AND THIRDLY ON THE PART OF THEMSELVES, THREE ENEMIES WHICH THEY OUGHT TO COMBAT INCESSANTLY.

You are happy, my dear children, infinitely happy, you possess God himself the source of all good, nevertheless do not deceive yourselves, your happiness will be sharply disputed, you have much to fear on three different parts; first on the part of the devil, secondly on the part of the world, thirdly on the part of yourselves. First on the part of the devil; this ancient enemy of mankind could not behold the happiness of Adam and Eve in the Terrestrial Paradise without a most cruel jealousy; he resolved to render them at first as guilty and afterwards as unhappy as himself; he succeeded, alas! but too well. Now not content to have corrupted the human race at its source

he makes persevering efforts to separate each of us from God and to drag us with him into evil. Nothing equals his fury: imagine to yourself a roaring lion who with gaping mouth, bristling mane and flashing eyes roams about a sheep-fold and you have an image of that which passes night and day around you. Imagine one of those enormous serpents which the frightened traveller sometimes meets in the deserts of Africa. To a great muscular strength these dangerous reptiles join a superabundance of cunning to surprise their prey. They wind their tail about a tree and conceal the rest of their body in the foliage; from thence they shoot forward with the rapidity of an arrow upon the imprudent animals which happen to pass near them; they envelope them in their winding folds, crush them, strangle them, and in the end devour them. Such is the ancient serpent; he conceals himself, disguises himself, multiplies snares and strews temptations in our path. A look, a word, a gesture, a moment's idleness, the least imprudence suffices for him, he is on the alert, he profits by all and we become his victims before we are scarcely aware of our danger. He attacks all, but particularly children. And why? because their weakness and inexperience

promise him an easy victory. Why again ? because their youthful years are the first fruits of life, if these first fruits are his he is almost confident of the possession of the rest. Again why ? because children, especially after their first communion, are the most tender objects of the love of our divine Saviour. In his implacable rage he burns with a desire to draw them to himself, thus to revenge himself of the defeat which Jesus Christ has made him endure. Such, my children is the first danger which menaces you, or rather the first enemy which you have to combat. Secondly on the part of the world. Until now, my dear children, you have lived in happy ignorance of the world under the shade of the parental roof. The conversation, the instruction, and above all, the example of your parents, if you have the happiness to possess virtuous ones, indeed everything that you have seen or heard has instilled piety into your young hearts. You imagine perhaps that it is the same in all families, and particularly in that great union of families called the world. Poor children ! Why is it necessary that I should dissipate so soon this sweet illusion ? why is it necessary that I should tell you that the world is entirely given over to evil ; that it is a great seducer who marks the entrance

into life of all the rising generation, in order to withdraw them from Jesus Christ? In truth this world which I have described to you, this world through which you will be obliged to pass, is that crowd of persons of all ages and of every condition, who, having abjured the maxims of the gospel, know no other rule of conduct than their corrupt inclinations. Its language, its maxims, its examples, its usages, its books, its songs, and even its pleasures are calculated to corrupt the amiable purity of your manners, to shake your young faith, and to cause you to forget your most sacred duties. To tell you how dangerous is this second enemy the narrow limits of this little book will not permit. 'Tis enough that you know, my dear friends, that for a child to preserve his faith and innocence in the midst of the world is not less miraculous than was the preservation of the young Hebrews in the furnace of Babylon. The world is a bloody arena where it is made a pastime, a glory, and even a study to destroy souls. There you will find men who mock at piety and all the practices of religion; others who attack the faith with rude jests and false reasoning; those who trample under foot the most holy laws of the Church; who work on Sundays, pay no regard to fasting-

days and read forbidden books. How many are there not who will seek to estrange you from the holy priests who have taken so much care of your childhoood ; who will speak to you of evil ; who will laugh at it and who will bestow upon you their odious and impertinent attentions ? Behold the world ! Now you know, my dear children, why the Saviour has so often struck it with anathema ; why the teachers of religion advise us to shun the world ; you understand why I join my voice to-day to that of Jeremiah, to say to you who will soon enter into this world as that prophet formerly said to the children of Israel when they were carried away captives into Babylon : “ You will go to Babylon,” he said to them, “ there you will see men who worship idols of gold, of silver, of stone and of wood, who consecrate to them their affections and their thoughts. Take care not to do like them ; be you insensible to those false gods, and when you see the crowd prostrate themselves before their ridiculous divinities prostrate yourselves interiorly and say from the bottom of your soul, Lord you are alone worthy of my homage and my love.” As the Israelites you will be some years captive in this Babylon of the world, witnesses, despite yourselves, of its scandals ; but console

yourselves, your exile will have an end. Only imitate the Israelites; have no communication with these adorers of false Gods, and say always: "Lord God of my youth and my first communion, I wish to love and serve you alone." Such, my dear children, is the second danger which threatens you, the second enemy which you have to combat. Thirdly on the part of yourselves. During one of the last wars, an able general was shut up in a citadel with a numerous garrison; the place was strong and abundantly powerful. Soon the enemy came to besiege it, they many times endeavored to take it by assault. Useless efforts; they were always driven back with loss. They thought of raising the siege, when they found the means of corrupting a soldier of the garrison; a traitor opened to them during the night a private door. The enemy threw themselves into the place, strangled a part of the soldiers in their beds and took the rest prisoners, and by sunrise the banner of the strangers floated over the rampart; the place was taken. You are this general of the army, the citadel is your soul, your faculties, your mind, your heart, your memory, are this garrison; your senses, your eyes, your ears, your tongue, should vigilantly guard your soul. The munitions are the

graces with which our Lord comes to enrich you; the enemies are the world and the devil. They assail you in vain; you are stronger than they, because Jesus Christ is with you; but take care, unhappily there are traitors in the place; at the bottom of your soul there are passions which were born with you, perfidious soldiers who continually seek to betray the place by opening the doors to the enemy. In a word, know well, my dear children, that your own heart is the traitor that would betray you to the world and the devil, and occasion the loss of your soul. If you watch it well, if you vigilantly guard your eyes, your ears, your tongue and your imagination which are these sentinels, your soul is impregnable. As a furious dog the devil might bark at you, but he could not bite you. As an ignoble enemy the world might hurl against you the venom of its scandals, but it could not penetrate the sanctuary of your soul. Which, then, is your most dangerous enemy? It is yourselves, or, that you may understand me better, it is the passions which reside in you, the temptations which continually solicit you to evil: it is then of yourselves that you should have the greatest distrust. A momentary victory in this long and terrible struggle will not suffice. But though the prospective

be alarming let it not discourage you. Of yourselves, undoubtedly you can do nothing, but with Jesus Christ you can do all ; the victory is in your hands. O my God ! you know my weakness and the strength of my enemies ; what shall I do ? Ah ! be not far from me, remain always with your child, in you I place all my hope ; and you Mary, my good mother, be thou my protectress and my refuge.



CHAPTER III.

OF THE NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITY OF PERSEVERANCE AFTER FIRST COMMUNION.

IT is to arms that I call you, my dear children, to repel the numerous enemies who foam with rage about you. No means will be neglected on their part to deprive you of the precious treasure which you possess ; let nothing be neglected on your part to preserve it. It is a question of life or death ; it is a struggle of which God himself is the price ; the war will not be long, it will last but during this life : yet such is our condition upon earth ; we are all soldiers and must bear our arms day and night, rejoicing only in the anticipation of victory. But how is victory to be gained ? by perseverance. Bear in mind then these two thoughts : I *must* persevere, I *can* persevere. I must persevere, yes I must, since I shall always have the same motives for persevering that I had for communicating. Now in my first communion I have given myself entirely to Jesus Christ ; why ? because I

have learned that Jesus Christ alone merits all my love. Very well ! to-morrow, in one year, in ten years, will it be less true that Jesus Christ merits all my love ? To-morrow, in one year, in ten years, will I find a more faithful friend, a more tender father, a more amiable and loving brother ? To-morrow, in one year, in ten years, will Jesus Christ cease to be my principle and my life, or will it be no longer true that my heart was made for him ? To-morrow, in a year, in ten years, Jesus Christ will have bestowed upon me a number of new benefits. Very well ! can it be that when he will have a thousand more claims to my gratitude and love, he will permit me to be ungrateful ?

I must persevere, yes I must, for by not persevering I offer a grievous outrage to Jesus Christ. Would I at this moment imitate Pilate and place my Saviour in comparison with Barrabas—that is with a mortal sin ? The very thought fills me with horror. Very well ! To-morrow, in a year, in ten years will this thought be less horrible, this comparison less abominable ? Ah ! it will be much more so. Why ! Because after your first communion you would be more conscious of the sin there would be in entertaining such a thought or making such a comparison. Because you would

have served two masters, Jesus Christ and satan, and you would say to Jesus Christ, "I have borne your yoke, I have eaten the bread of your table and I have weighed your promises, go, depart from my heart, I no longer wish you to reign over me. I desire now, to run after the world and to give myself to Satan." Dear children ! shall such be the end of all your good resolutions ? Ah, my God, permit not such an evil to befall me !

I must persevere, yes I must, for I owe it to the church. This tender mother has brought me forth to Jesus Christ, she has guided my first steps, and has nourished my childhood with the bread of the holy word, in preference to so many other children of my age, who will never have the same instructions, the same cares, nor the same graces. I owe much gratitude for this. Very well ! To-morrow, in a year, in ten years, will I owe less ? Moreover, this tender mother places upon me her sweetest hopes ; she expects piety, amiable innocence and lively and sincere faith to revive in me ; she expects that I will wipe away some of her tears, that I will console her in her sorrows, and that I will make amends by my filial tenderness for the ingratitude of so many others. Shall I deceive these hopes ! Still

more, shall I give the devil the cruel pleasure of saying, in shewing me to Jesus Christ—"Do you now recognise this child? it belongs to me; where is now the robe of innocence with which you had adorned it? It bears my livery to-day; in giving it thy body and blood, thy priests have but fattened my victim."

I must persevere, yes I must, for I owe it to myself. I am aware that I have but *one* soul, which has cost the blood of a God and which I must save at any price! Will it be less true that life was given me but to save my soul? Will it be less true that my soul has cost the blood of a God? And at the end of my life, if I should have amassed the treasures of the earth, acquired possession of the entire universe and have lost my soul, will it be less true that I shall live eternally the most unhappy of creatures? The only way to save my soul is to persevere; "they alone shall be saved," said our Lord, "who shall persevere to the end." It is little to have commenced well, it is necessary to continue well, above all to finish well. Judas continued badly and ended badly, what did it avail him to have commenced well? It is absolutely necessary that you persevere, my dear children, but *can* you persevere? To this question I reply in two words: God

desires that you should persevere, then you can do so, because God commands nothing that is impossible. What! a great number of others of your age, of your condition and temperament have persevered, and can you not do what so many others could do? Have you not all that is necessary for perseverance? in effect what is necessary for perseverance?—the *desire*—but the desire of a constant, firm, and efficacious will; that is to say, to desire, and to make use of all the means to secure your perseverance; whoever desires the end, desires the means. These means I shall make known to you in the following chapters. Yes, my God! I firmly believe that it is necessary that I should persevere. Shall I be so unfortunate as to lose my gratitude, love and fidelity in proportion as you acquire new claims to my affection? Ah Lord! do not permit such an evil to beset me. O! Mary, my good mother, obtain for me the good will which is necessary to secure my perseverance.

CHAPTER IV.

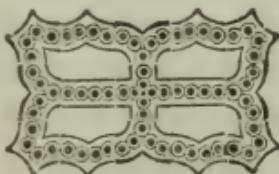
FIRST MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE—CONSTANT
REMEMBRANCE OF FIRST COMMUNION.

Is it not true, my dear children, that you would not now, for all the world, commit a mortal sin? Is it not true that you would not now, for all the world, chase Jesus Christ from your hearts? What do I say! Chase him! You would not offend him by deliberately committing a venial sin. By introducing the devil into your hearts, after having received there your Saviour, you would resemble the abomination of desolation! mortal sin and first communion are to you two things which are incompatible, ideas which exclude each other. Why so? because your hearts are still warm, and palpitating with love for the Saviour. His recent visit, the tenderness which he has testified for you, the promises which you have made him, still produce a lively impression upon you. Very well, my children, is it not true that if you are always in the same disposition, if the thought of your

first communion which gives you these beautiful sentiments always has the same influence upon you, is it not true that you would never consent to a mortal sin ? And what means are efficacious to enable you always to preserve this thought of your first communion ?—there is but one, it is that you keep it in remembrance ; it is that you remember it all the days of your life It is undoubtedly to this powerful remembrance that so many young hearts, in which the passions once burned, owe to-day their perseverance in goodness, amiability, piety and purity of manners. It is also in this great souvenir that you, yourselves, will find the secret of avoiding sin. But what will you do, my dear children, to keep this salutary remembrance always present ? Have an engraving which represents this great action. Offer up your prayer, morning and night, before this holy image. In the morning ask yourself, how should I spend the day of my first communion ? If I were to make my first communion to-day, how would I spend my time ? how would I pray ? how obedient would I be ? And at night ; have I spent to-day as the day of my first communion ? have I been as obedient ? have I prayed as on the day of my first communion ? It is above all in preparing to receive the

sacraments, that you should recall the lively remembrance of your first communion. How did I prepare for the confession which preceded my first communion ? what was my sincerity ? what my repentance ? what was my attention to the advice of my confessor ? what was my fidelity and my fervor in performing my penance ? Above all, how did I prepare for the first communion of my life ? Oh ! my dear children, I am certain that if you act under the impression of these salutary thoughts, all your confessions and communions will be worthy of the first ; and why should you not always take the same care in preparing for the reception of the sacraments ? In a year, in ten years will they be less holy, less august, less necessary, less admirable ? Will it not always be the same God who comes to give himself to you ? Each year you should celebrate the anniversary of your first communion by approaching the holy table. This communion should be offered for two ends. 1st, To thank our Lord for your first communion, and all the communions which you have made since : 2dly, To beg him to preserve or to renew in you the sentiments with which you received him, for the first time in your life. You would be fortunate if, after the example of truly pious children, you

would prepare yourself for this memorable anniversary by a novena and a day's retreat. Your principal care during this retreat should be to produce an exact account of the state of your soul. Am I still the same as on the day of my first communion ? am I better ? in what have I changed ? If for the worse, apply a prompt, special and efficacious remedy. Do not fail to make known to your confessor, the result of your examination, also the means which you propose employing to renew your first fervor. O my God ! shall I ever be so ungrateful as to forget your goodness and my promises. Permit not that I should ever say or do any thing which is unworthy of your child. O Mary, my good mother, obtain for me this grace from your son.



CHAPTER V.

**SECOND MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE—PRAYER ;
NECESSITY OF PRAYER ; QUALITIES OF
PRAYER.**

ALL religion is a law of prayer; all holy books breathe, thus to speak, but prayer. Our Lord wishes to be importuned with prayer; he wishes to grant all to our prayers, he loves to be disarmed by our prayers. "Pray," said the Saviour of the world, "pray always; you must pray without ceasing, ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you. You can do nothing without me. Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Everywhere and on all occasions this divine Master exhorts his disciples to prayer, as the necessary means of arriving at the kingdom of heaven; and, although he himself had no need of it, he has set us the example. After having taught all day in the temple, he retired to the Mount of Olives to pass the night there in prayer; the Apostles have transmitted the same precepts and the same example,

and their writings are full of exhortations to prayer. He who abandons prayer after his first communion, is a lost child ; the prayer which is rare, neglected, feeble and distracted is like the beating of a heart which is freezing, and which will soon cease to beat, because it will be dead. In fact is it not evident, 1st, That of ourselves we can do nothing ? 2dly, That we have many evil inclinations ? 3dly, That we are surrounded by enemies who eagerly seek our destruction ? Then if God do not continually hold us by the hand, it is impossible for us to sustain ourselves in virtue ; but the succours of God, necessary each day, are obtained each day but by prayer. Then the day in which we neglect prayer, or what is the same, on which we pray badly, the soul is left defenceless, and without strength, to the mercy of the first enemy who shall wish to invade it. But how should we pray ? What are some of the qualities of prayer ? Behold the principal : the first quality is ATTENTION. To think of what we are saying is the very least we can do when we speak to God. Prayer without attention is useless. How can you wish God to hear you, said St. Cyprian, if you do not hear yourselves. To pray without attention is to imitate the Jews, of whom our Saviour said,

with bitterness: "these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Before you pray, says our Lord to us, prepare your soul, that you be not as those who tempt God. When you dispose yourselves to pray, my dear children, say to all strange thoughts; thoughts of amusement, of study, and of the world, remain at the door, leave me, I wish to be alone with God. An excellent means of avoiding distraction is to recall from time to time during the day, the presence of God. After you have taken these precautions, do not let the strange thoughts disturb you which present themselves to your mind; not being voluntary they are not culpable, and do not detract from the merit of your prayer. If grief, weakness, or any indisposition whatever prevent you from praying aloud, it is sufficient that you pray in your heart; you will then do all that is required of you, and God will be satisfied. The second quality of prayer is RESPECT. When we pray, all in us ought to pray; our mind by attention, our body by respect. If you wish to observe respect when you pray, think that you are on your knees before the throne of God, that the angels and saints are ranged around, regarding you, and that you appear in the presence of this holy and majestic

court, in the quality of a suppliant. Oh! if we were sensibly penetrated with this thought, would we, in our prayers, and in the church, assume postures which are not permitted in good society? Whence comes this indifference and listlessness, this levity which we observe in a great number? It is from want of *faith* in the presence of God. Animate then your *faith*, and you will be respectful. The third quality of prayer is FAITH. Our Lord, in teaching his disciples how they ought to pray, said to them, "ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; verily I say to you, whatever you shall ask in my name shall be given to you." Elsewhere the Holy Spirit expresses himself in these words, "ask with faith, and without hesitation;" in truth, my dear children, what we most want is to pray with *faith*. On one part, God has promised to hear us; on the other, is he not all powerful, is he not infinitely good, and does he not love us infinitely more than we love ourselves? Undoubtedly. Why? the love which we have for ourselves, and which all men united could have for us, is only a limited love; whereas the love of our Father, who is in heaven, is infinite. And more; is not God infinitely wise, and does he not know all our

wants, much better than we can know them ourselves? Does he not wish that we should ask of him all that we need, even our daily bread? Ask, then, of your celestial Father, with as much confidence as you would ask of your parents. What do I say! with a thousand times greater confidence. Be assured that God will always grant what you ask, or something far better. The fourth quality of prayer is PERSEVERANCE. You have often perceived that your parents do not always grant your requests the first time that you make them. This delay, which detracts nothing from their tenderness and desire to gratify you, is a proof of wisdom and solicitude. God does the same, and sometimes suffers us to ask a long time before he hears us. He sees that this delay is better for us than a sudden favour; this delay causes us to practice the most precious virtues; *humility*, in making us feel that we can do nothing of ourselves; *vigilance*, in making us careful, that there is nothing in us that can oppose our prayer or hinder its effect. Then do not discourage yourselves by saying, I pray and I obtain not; it is an illusion of the evil spirit. All prayer, provided it be well made, will infallibly obtain its reward. The fifth quality of prayer is, that it be made *in the name of Jesus Christ*.

Prayer is the money which we offer to God to obtain necessaries for body and soul. It is by prayer that we carry on a commerce between heaven and earth. The earth purchases, and heaven regulates the conditions of exchange ; then, that it may circulate, our coin should bear the stamp of the King of heaven, otherwise, it will be reputed false. In vain will we present it, the most necessary things will be refused us. That is to say, my dear children, all our prayers should be made in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church incessantly remind us of this; not one of her prayers, but concludes in these words: "per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum ;" that is to say, through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven whereby we may be saved. Jesus Christ is our only mediator ; if united to his, our prayers are all powerful ; he is always heard on account of the infinite respect due to his person. O, my God ! I believe that without prayer I cannot preserve the grace of my first communion : I make a firm resolution to pray every morning and night. I conjure you to give me a love of prayer ; to give me the attention, respect, faith and perseverance necessary to render prayer efficacious. I supplicate you through Jesus Christ, who

livest and reignest with you and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. O Mary ! my good mother, obtain for me the grace to pray like you.



CHAPTER VI.

THIRD MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE—THE FREQUENT RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENTS OF PENANCE AND THE EUCHARIST.

THE world is a vast amphitheatre, where men combat incessantly; the devil and his satellites on one side, and on the other our Lord and his children. Even you, my dear friends, have already entered the lists. You have combated from your infancy, and these first combats are but the prelude to more terrible assaults. Until your last sigh, you must bear your arms in your hands; it is your condition, it is the condition of all who come into the world. Yes, my children, your life is a continual warfare. Now it is impossible to endure this long struggle without being covered with dust and sweat, it is even impossible to escape without some wounds. The chief, under whose orders we combat, is most good, and in his infinite goodness he has erected on the place of the battle a magnificent edifice, which is his church. There a salutary bath is always

prepared, in which he invites us to purify and refresh ourselves; there we are attended by physicians as compassionate as enlightened, and who have at their disposal all the remedies necessary for healing the different wounds received in the combat. Could I better represent to you, my dear children, the sacred bath of penance? Could I make you better understand the necessity of often coming to plunge your soul into it? Could I make you admire more the goodness and providence of your divine chief? Ah! never imitate those presumptuous youths, who regarding themselves as invulnerable, hope to sustain the shock of the combat without re-animating their strength in this salutary bath. How foolish! their light, but numerous wounds will soon cause their blood to flow from twenty places, with their blood, their strength diminishes, their weapons become heavy to their weak hands, their limbs unsteady, their eyes dim, and they can fight but feebly. The enemy redoubles his rage, he overcomes them, and their brilliant armor, their robe of innocence, and all that they possess, are carried off by the victorious demon, and make an insulting trophy, which he shows from afar to Jesus Christ. Nor is this all; he loads them with chains, and conducts them to his

dark prisons. These misfortunes will be theirs ; they would avoid all these evils if, obedient to the commands of their chief, they would often repair their strength in the salutary bath of penance. Let us speak without figure. Experience proves that we can expect neither fervour nor progress from a child who does not frequently confess, who does not confess every month ; by such degrees as he relaxes upon this point, his piety declines, and his fall approaches. Besides, my dear children, why would you cease to be regular in your confessions ? Is it a duty which you can perform well by performing it but seldom ? Is it when dangers will be greater that there will be less necessity for using these precautions ? Oh ! to abandon thus the tribunal of penance would be to poorly understand the true wants of our souls. Poor children ! many troubles attend your course through life ; sickness, reverses, misfortunes, losses, ingratitude and vexations ; indeed, have they not come already, and each in its way made you to feel the full force of the name ‘valley of tears,’ given to the earth which we inhabit ? Now where will you find consolation and relief ? Where will you find one who comprehends all your grief, sympathizes in all your sorrows, tenderly

dries your tears, and sheds the balm of confidence and peace into your heart ? Nor is this all ; how often do you not feel doubts and uncertainties, perplexities and anxieties, which weary you so much as to render life almost a burden ! Now where will you find a more safe, a more disinterested counsellor than our Lord in the tribunal of penance ? And if you should ever lose the peace of your soul by sin, where will you find it, if not in humbly asking it of him who possesses it ? And where will he restore it to you ? Nowhere, but in the tribunal of penance. You have seen enough, my children, to make you sensible of the necessity of having frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance. Be then, faithful to the resolutions which you have made, of depending upon it for your perseverance and your eternity. O my God ! I thank you from the bottom of my heart, for having prepared a salutary bath, where my soul can recover her purity and her strength. I promise you, Lord, that I will be an example to others in having frequent recourse to this necessary remedy. O ! Mary, my good mother, obtain for me the grace to be faithful to frequent confession.

The Divine Chief, under whose orders we combat, did not consider it sufficient to have

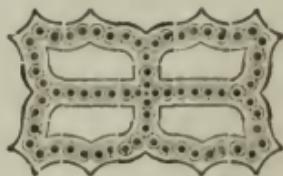
established a bath, wherein to purify our souls, but he has prepared a table, where in coming from the bath we may find refreshing food ; you know this food, you know this table, and that our Lord desires that you should often approach it. Hear him—“take and eat : my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.” Thus, my dear children, without the holy communion you would certainly be vanquished, you would certainly die. It is with the life of the soul, as with the body, neither the soul nor the body could be preserved in a state of health and strength, but by frequent use of wholesome and appropriate nourishment. The nourishment of the soul is the bread of the holy eucharist. Communion is to the soul, what the sun is to nature, the heart to the body, the source to the stream, the sap to the tree. Why did our divine Saviour compare the holy eucharist to the manna with which the Israelites were fed during forty years ? Is it not because he wished to shew us how much he desires that his adorable body should be the *daily* nourishment of the Christian people, in the pilgrimage of this life, as the manna was that of the Hebrews

in the deserts of Arabia? Why in the eucharist does he prefer to give himself to us, under the appearances of bread and wine, and in the form of a repast, if not because it is a nourishment of which we should partake, not rarely, nor on extraordinary occasions, as we use a medicine, but frequently, daily if we could, as we each day take the food, which nourishes our bodies? Thus the first christians, our fathers in the faith, who so gloriously combated in this amphitheatre of the world, where you yourselves now combat, failed not to receive *each day* the bread of life. The same spirit which animated the church in the first ages induces her to speak in later times: the holy council of Trent wished that the faithful should communicate not only in spirit and by affection, but by the reception of the sacrament of the eucharist, as often as they assisted at the mass, that they might derive abundant fruit from this sacrifice. But even when the necessity of communicating often would seem less pressing, will it not be sufficient to induce you to communicate frequently, my children, to know that your amiable Saviour most ardently desires that you should do so? Night and day he invites you from his tabernacles, 'Come to me, my beloved, drink the wine

of my table, eat the bread which I have prepared for you. If any one be thirsty let him come to me and I will appease his thirst." He uses the most tender solicitations to attract us to his august banquet. Here he promises us immortality, divine life, his own life. Here he appears under the figure of a father of a family, who invites a large company to a great feast, and who, on the refusal of the invited guests, ordered his servants to go out into all the public roads and the bye-ways, and bring in to the feast all whom they should find there; not only the rich, the great, and the healthy, but the poor, the weak, the infirm, the blind, and the lame, and even to use a species of violence in bringing those who should hesitate to come. Our Lord loves but little those christians whom the church is obliged to menace with its thunders, to make them come to the feast of the Saviour. Ah! they no longer think of their first communion, nor the promises which they made on that great day. With you, my dear children, I trust it will not be thus; you will eat often of this celestial bread, that you may often procure the ineffable happiness of having heaven within your soul; for communion is the paradise of the earth. Beloved of your Saviour, never desert the table of the

Lord, and as so many others never be content to appear there but once each year, en passant, and by way of acquaintance.

O my God ! I firmly believe that frequent communion is the most efficacious means of preserving the life of my soul, increasing in virtue and persevering in your love. Humbly prostrate before you, I now make a firm resolution to communicate often. O ! Mary, obtain for me the grace always to love like you this divine Saviour, as long as I love him I shall communicate often.



CHAPTER VII.

FOURTH MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE—DEVOTION
TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

IT is certain, my dear children, that you could not remain faithful to your promises and merit heaven, without the grace of God; the word of our Lord is “without me you can do nothing”—absolutely nothing, but with him we can do all—absolutely all. What, then, is the secret of having our Lord always to aid us? It is this: God is our father, is he not? Very well; there is some one who disposes of the heart of our father, and we, ourselves, dispose principally of the heart of this person. Undoubtedly you are far from believing yourselves so powerful, nevertheless, I do not exaggerate; but who is this person at all times so powerful that she can obtain all things from God, so good that she places her great power at the command of little children? Your heart has named her before me; it is *Mary*, whom no one ever invokes in vain. With what transport do

I join my voice to-day to those of innumerable pontiffs and kings, of just and sinners, of rich and poor, of the aged and of children, which arise from the four ends of the earth, and mingle with the concerts of the angels, who for nineteen centuries have incessantly sung—"Hail Mary, Virgin Mother of God ! hail virgin most powerful ! hail queen of men and angels ! hail health of the weak ! hail refuge of sinners ! hail help of christians ! hail hope of the human family, hail ! What need you fear, my dear children ? Throw yourselves into the arms of Mary ; no one can draw from the arms of a powerful mother the child of her love. How can you conceive the tenderness of Mary for you ? How can you conceive the extent of her solicitude, her foresight and clemency ? Where will you find terms of comparison ? See this tender mother to whom heaven has given a child ; twenty times a day she embraces it, she presses it fondly to her bosom, she rocks it, she nourishes it, she lulls it, she charms it with her songs, she cannot do too much for it ; nothing would induce her to part with it, her exertions, thoughts and affections are all bestowed upon her child. During the day she watches by its cradle, and she rises frequently during the night to assure herself

that it wants nothing, to quiet its cries and satisfy its desires. Her child is to her gold, silver, jewels, society, feasts, the whole world. This mother loves her child well, but Mary loves us more. See this mother whose child is sick, she herself suffers all its griefs. Its tears cause hers to flow, its sighs induce hers; she would sacrifice everything to her child; consultations, prolonged wa'ches, laborious cares, no exertion is too great for her. To no one will she concede her place by the pillow of the sick bed, to no one will she entrust the care of her child. This mother loves her child well, but Mary loves us still more. See this mother whom poverty has reduced to the want of necessaries; she labors night and day to soften to her child the rigors of its lot. She deprives herself of a morsel of bread, the fruit of her hard labor, to appease the hunger of her child, and to render its couch less hard she sleeps upon the straw. If when sick some crumbs are brought to her from the tables of the wealthy, more palatable food than hard dry bread, more pleasant beverage than cold water, observe that she does not touch it, her child is out, and the best is reserved for it when it returns. This mother loves her child, but Mary loves us still more. Yes, my dear

children, Mary loves you a hundred times more than a good mother, a thousand times more than all the mothers united ever have or ever can love their children. In whatever position you may be, whatever fault you may have had the misfortune to commit, Mary will still love you ; like the love of her Son, her love is immutable ; then always have recourse to her, ask for grace through her. But what means must you take to secure to yourself in a special manner the powerful protection of Mary ? The same that you take to please your mother. Now when you would please your mother what means do you employ ? You do as she desires, you obey her with care and promptness. You rise as soon as she calls you, you keep silence, you pray, you study your lessons, you write, you read, when she wishes it. You endeavor to shew her that you are her child. She is pleased with you, because her will regulates yours, and she can refuse you nothing. Perform in the same way the will of your mother who is in heaven ; imitate her virtues, strive to become as amiable, humble, modest and pious as she, and then you will be her dear children and she will refuse you nothing. Behold, then, the true means of meriting the favors of the blessed Virgin is to imitate her

virtues. Do you wish to bear this essential point always in mind? I will tell you a sure and easy method of doing so, it is this, three times a day, morning, noon and evening, ask yourselves very seriously, if the blessed Virgin were in my place what would she do? how obedient would she be? how would she pray? how would she work? Believe me, my dear children, this question would inspire you, according to circumstances, with zeal for labor, discretion in your words, modesty in your looks, and amiability and charity towards your neighbor. Then each of you can say with truth: "I am the child of Mary." To obtain the grace thus to imitate our divine mother adopt some devotion in her honor. These devotions are very numerous, the Church has an infinite variety of them. She feels that Mary is the succor of christians, and therefore she encourages (according to time and circumstances) all practices in honor of the queen of heaven. I will mention some of them to you and I will commence by saying that every pious child, adopts one or more of these practices of devotion, the performance of which he regards as a sacred duty. The blessed Virgin highly values the angelic salutation, because it recalls the joy that she felt in learning from the angel Gabriel that she was to become

the mother of God; this devotion consists, 1st, In saying every day on rising and retiring three ‘hail Marys,’ on your knees, and adding to each ‘hail Mary’ this short prayer, “by thy sacred virginity and immaculate conception, O! most pure Virgin Mary, intercede for me and obtain for me a true purity of soul and body.” Afterwards ask the blessing of Mary as that of a mother, then place yourselves under her special protection, that she may preserve you from all sin during the day or during the night. 2nd, In reciting the angelus with the three ‘hail Marys,’ morning, noon, and night. There have been great indulgences attached to this practice. Formerly at the first sound of the bell all the faithful fell upon their knees and recited the ‘angelus.’ 3rd, In saluting the mother of God by reciting the ‘hail Mary’ every time the clock strikes. The second practice of devotion is novenas. Nine days before the festivals of the blessed Virgin her true children prepare to celebrate them by some practices of piety; some impose upon themselves some little mortification at their meals, others recite a prayer each day, some give alms, and others read meditations from some good book which treats of the glories of Mary. They propose to themselves to commence a novena to

obtain some particular grace or to correct some fault, on the eve of the festival they confess and on the next day they communicate. After communion they offer themselves without reserve to their good mother, and ask of her the grace which they have solicited during the novena. The third practice of devotion is the mortification on Saturday. This day is especially consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, and the children of Mary never let it pass without honoring their mother in a special manner. Many practice some mortification in her honor, assist at the holy sacrifice of the mass and say some particular prayer to the glory of Mary. The fourth practice of devotion is the Rosary. This devotion must be very acceptable to the Blessed Virgin, since she has obtained so many favours for those who have been faithful to it. It must be very laudable, since the church encourages it and urges it in so pressing a manner, and that of all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin it is the most universal and the most popular. I say nothing to you here, my children, of the scapular, nor the Sodalities in honor of the Blessed Virgin; you must have heard of them already, and your confessor must have recommended to you such of these practices as are most appropriate for your

age and condition. There is in the church a prayer so celebrated that I cannot pass over it in silence ; it is a prayer that you know and that a great number of persons of all ages and ranks love to recite every day. I speak of the ‘Memorare, the Remember.’ O Mary, my good mother, I place all my confidence in you, I wish to love you and do all in my power to increase my love for you. Receive favorably the desires of your child and aid me in accomplishing it. I know that those who love you are acceptable in the sight of God ; I know that after the glory of his name, he desires nothing so much as to see you honored and loved by men. Those who love you have never been deceived in their hopes. I wish to be of those who love you ; I wish to love you under God above all things.



CHAPTER VIII.

FIFTH MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE—FLYING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

By *occasions of sin* I mean every thing which by its nature, or on account of our weakness, is the cause of our offending God. What would you say, my dear children, if the captain of a vessel, who, when warned of certain rocks, replies: "I am aware that many vessels have been lost in these dangerous straits, nevertheless I will pass them." What would you say of a traveller to whom a forest has been denounced, as being infested with robbers, and who replies: "I am aware that many have fallen there by the hands of these brigands, I am alone, I carry a rich treasure, yet nevertheless I will pass through it"! The answer is on your lips, you would say they are rash. If this captain be shipwrecked, if this traveller be robbed and assassinated, it is their own fault, they deserve it; "who loves the danger shall perish in it." Rash, foolish men! See then, my dear children, the name which

you give to these men who voluntarily, and without good reason peril their fortunes and their lives ; but what name, I ask you, do you give to the youth, who voluntarily, without reason, and in spite of a thousand warnings, perils the life of his soul, and his eternal fortune, in exposing the treasure of his innocence ? What can he allege in his justification ? Shall he say that he is stronger than others ? that the blows of which they have died, shall find him invulnerable ? I reply to him. What ! are you then of a different nature from the rest of men ? Is your heart of marble or of brass ? have you made a compact with satan and has he promised never to attack you, or to deal you only such blows as you please ? Has God promised you the victory ? I know that he preserved the children of Israel in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lions' den ; but it was by his orders and for his love that they exposed themselves to the activity of the flames and the rage of the beasts. And it is in spite of his prohibition that you offer your heart to the empoisoned arrows of the enemy, and yet you expect to have nothing to fear. Beware, beware ! you are the children of Adam, inclined to evil from your infancy, you can then fall ; if you are presumptuous you will certainly fall. "God

resists the proud ;" our Lord, Jesus Christ, speaking one day of the occasions of sin, thus expresses himself, " If your eye scandalize you, pluck it out, if your hand, cut it off ;" that is to say, if you wish to preserve your innocence, fly everything that could occasion its loss, separate yourself from all those dangers, those persons, those conversations, those pleasures, those occupations, were they as dear to you as your eye, as necessary as your right hand, otherwise you will perish. In effect, my dear children, the grace of God is the only thing which can sustain you, and yet, notwithstanding the express prohibition of God and of your conscience, you will encounter these dangerous occasions. Have then a great distrust of yourself. Suffer yourself to be always led by the maternal hand of religion. Do not fear, you will enjoy all liberty that is necessary for happiness, without having to dread those humiliations and disasters which carry bitterness into the soul, and sometimes empoison the whole life. By doing so you will secure your precious treasure. O ! my God, I feel that I am weakness and inconstancy itself. What will be the fate of my innocence, if I do not avoid with extreme care *all occasions of sin !* I carry

my precious treasure in a frail vessel ; if I
strike it against the least stone it will break.
O my God ! give me a great distrust of my-
self and great confidence in you. O Mary !
my good mother, obtain for me this double
grace of my divine Saviour.



CHAPTER IX.

ON READING BAD BOOKS.

NOTHING is more pernicious, my dear children, than reading bad books. They are of two kinds—the one attacks virtue and religion, the other attacks good morals. By reading the first you will lose your faith, by reading the second you will lose your innocence. I hope, my children, that these dangers do not already threaten you. Under the eye of your virtuous parents, you will read nothing but what is proper and appropriate for Christian children. But hereafter, when you are grown, you will hear persons extol books which are suspicious, dangerous, indeed everything that is bad ; they will tell you of such or such a work, that they have read, “ It is a masterpiece ; what harm can there be in it ? ” By pompous phrases of this kind, they will excite your curiosity. What harm can there be in them ! I ask what harm is there *not* in them ? Let us first speak of books which are dangerous to morals, which I shall de-

signate under the general head of romances. The most fortunate dispositions cannot withstand the poison that is imbibed by such reading. Observation will prove to you that nothing is more frivolous than a head filled with a crowd of romantic adventures. The fruit of a good education, innocence of youth, love of duty, all is shaken by these bad works. Those who were once reserved, modest, and distinguished for an amiable prudence, after having read romances soon lose all traces of that modesty, which so much adorns young persons. The love of dress succeeds the love of simplicity, they become anxious to do as others do, to seek the pleasures that others seek. They spend the day in reading romances, dream of them at night, and that they may themselves realize the beautiful sentiments of the heroes of romance, they accustom themselves to love only what the world loves, and to neglect the duties that religion prescribes. See the fruits of reading these insinuating and perfidious books. I could make a large volume, were I to record all the tragic events and scandals, above all, the madness and suicide of a multitude of young persons who have been ruined by reading romances. If such are the evils, and they are, alas! but too real, that these books occasion, what

induces such reading? Can any one shew me any good which it has produced? Since they have read these romances, have they become more pure, is their faith more lively, their piety more tender? Are children more docile and obedient, more attentive to their duties? are domestics more faithful? are families more united? A Protestant minister said not long ago, on beholding the infinite variety of sects, "I could write down on my thumb nail all that is certain at present among Protestants;" so I say that I can write on my thumb nail all the good that has been produced by reading romances. Then, my children, never read romances, or any other work of which you are ignorant, without asking the advice of some enlightened person who will direct you, not according to the false maxims of the world, but according to the maxims of the Gospel. Nothing is more wise than the following advice: "It is according to the law of the Gospel that we should regulate our lives, for it is by the law of the gospel that we wlll be judged."

We know with what earnestness and perfidy impiety strives to propagate bad books, plays and immoral songs, with what eagerness she opens those libraries which contain the true poison of the soul. What must we

conclude from this, if not that to the eyes of the enemies of religion bad books are the most powerful means of weakening faith and corrupting morals ? Alas ! they are not mistaken ; it is bad books, particularly works against faith, which have caused all the tumult and disorders, all the scandals, and consequently all the calamities of which we are the witnesses or the victims. That this is not an exaggeration, all sensible persons will admit ; it is not a false assertion, for the impious boast of it. Thus the frightful shipwreck, in which nearly an entire generation has perished, will be to you, my dear children, a great lesson ; a terrible warning never to read, upon any pretext whatever, works contrary to the spirit of religion. What a pity it is to hear young persons who imprudently read these books, attempt to defend themselves by saying that they wish to examine both sides. Can it be then, that the certainty of christian truths depend upon human reasons or human objections ? Who are you, to decide whether the oracles of God should be admitted or rejected ? Besides, the pretended desire to examine both sides, is but a pretext, and the proof of it is, that after having read the objections in impious books, they take no pains to seek answers to them, in books which de-

fend the faith. And now shall I tell you the cause of all this? It is this; when persons arrive at the age of eighteen or twenty and the passions become impatient of restraint and begin to rebel, and the heart becomes tainted, they endeavor to calm the remorse, which always follows the first deviation from the proper path, and instead of seeking tranquility in return to virtue, they seek it in the objections against the virtues, which are so contrary to their corrupt inclinations. Whether good or bad, all arguments seem to them unanswerable; an equivocation, a pleasantry, a notorious falsehood, which they repeat with assurance, pass for demonstrations as soon as they accord with the desires of a heart which is no longer innocent. Thus they become incredulous, not by *conviction* but by *corruption*. O my God! I reject what the Church rejects. I renounce forever all reading calculated to corrupt the innocence of my morals, or the purity of my faith. Your holy law shall be the object of my studies and my meditations, for to fear God and keep His commandments is all that is required of men. O Mary! my mother, obtain for me a great distaste for all dangerous reading.

CHAPTER X.

ON KEEPING BAD COMPANY.

WHERE, my dear children, shall I find words powerful enough to induce you always to avoid bad company, that most fatal rock, more formidable than all others ? All that I can say to you is that you are lost if you approach it. Behold a truth so certain that it has become a proverb : “ Shew me your company and I'll tell who you are.” O my God ! there is perhaps not a single reprobate in hell, who could not say, “ It is this one or that one who has occasioned my loss ; before I went into such company I was innocent. Fool ! if only I had not taken that step I should have been a saint and now I am a reprobate. I am lost forever, lost without recourse, lost for eternity ” !!! Fly, dear children, fly bad company as you would fly the sight of a serpent. You must fear it as you fear hell, because it is the entrance into hell. Let nothing induce you ever to be drawn into it : its touch burns like fire, soils like dirt, kills like the plague.

Great God ! what will become of the flower of your innocence, so beautiful and so tender. What will become of that virtue by which you resemble the angels, but which a word will blemish, as a breath dims a glass ? what will become of that mildness, that amiable piety which makes the delicacies of your heart and which charms the heart of God himself ? Adieu ! all these blessings ! blessings which are preferable to all others, blessings which once lost cannot be recovered ! Adieu forever ! I know, my dear children, that you have at present little to fear from bad company ; if your parents be virtuous and understand your dearest interests they will watch with solicitude, that nothing may taint your innocence. But you will not always remain under the parental wing ; you will soon take your flight and this will be the moment of danger, the moment when you should arm yourselves with precautions and remember my counsels. O ! how perilous is the situation of an innocent child in the midst of the world, or what is more frightful, in the midst of bad company ! It is a tender lamb in the midst of wolves, a pearl in the midst of swine, an angel in the midst of a troop of demons. And will you be thus situated some day, my dear children ? no, I cannot

entertain such a thought. But I repeat if you voluntarily remain in bad company you will be lost. It is well for you, however, to know that that company is not the most dangerous, whose purposes are impious or obscene, or who directly solicit you to evil: in this case every virtuous soul is upon its guard and speedily withdraws from them. The most dangerous company is that where the poison is concealed under a virtuous exterior and engaging manners, where religion and those who practise it are not openly assailed, but where the maxims, usages and pleasures of the world are extoled, and where every endeavor is made to inspire by degrees another spirit than the spirit of Jesus Christ. Behold those whom you have most to fear! O my God! I throw myself at your feet, trembling with fear of the dangers which threaten me: remove from me all occasions of sin. O Lord! you know my weakness; shall I perish in it like so many others? I now make a firm resolution to avoid all those persons who, by their love of the world and of vanity, by indifference to religion, by light sayings and equivocal words, try to weaken in me the sentiments of my first communion. O! Mary, my good mother obtain for me the grace always to remember my resolution.

CHAPTER XI.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

HUMAN RESPECT is the great bug-bear of weak souls. It is to the fear of this vain phantasm that a multitude of christians of all ages each day sacrifice their salvation, become unfaithful to their baptismal vows and the promises of their first communion, abandon the sacraments and crucify Jesus Christ anew. Human respect is the crime of cowards, it is a culpable fear that causes them to violate the laws of God and of the Church that they may avoid the censure of the world. When you say to them; "why have you violated your conscience? why when seated at a table loaded with meats, have you not refused them? why, when the time has arrived for you to approach the holy sacraments or to assist at the divine office have you not fulfilled your duties?" "I dare not; what would the world say?" What would the world say! where is the world which you so much fear? to what may it be reduced? At most to some few per-

sons, whom perhaps you would blush to resemble: this is the ridiculous bug-bear to which you sacrifice your duty and your eternity! Fear of the world is a weakness which corrupts the heart; it is a real madness. If there be any thing unreasonable upon earth, it is to endeavor to please the world; if there be any thing impossible it is to succeed in doing so. You will always displease some by the same means by which you have pleased others, and you will at all times have censors of your conduct. Very well, my dear children, will you be wise, will you be reasonable, if you neglect to secure your salvation because you fear a disappointment which you know not how to avoid, which you cannot in any way escape? Would it not be better to be contemned by the wicked than by the good? The contempt of the wicked is a glory, their censure is praise. But then you would wish to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and to the interests of your soul as far as it should be the pleasure of the world. If you are damned will the world draw you out from hell? Do you wish that I should tell you the whole truth? You will never be honored by men as long as you are dishonored in the sight of God. You receive the price of your prevarication

and neglect of duty in the contempt of those whom you have endeavored to please. Why ? because among all the wicked, even the most perverted, there are certain secret lights which make them despise those who resemble them, and esteem those whom they have not the courage to resemble. See, then, if there be any one more contemptible than the slave of human respect. Like a weather-cock, he changes with every wind, he has not a thought of his own, the sport of those who surround him he changes his language, thoughts, and conduct to suit the persons whom he meets. A deserter from all parties, he betrays upon the first occasion the cause which he seems to have embraced, and do you think he will be esteemed ? No, no, my dear children, men are paid for their cowardice, by the contempt of the world and the indignation of God whose justice awaits them ; for they are most criminal for being ashamed of God. Hoist then your standard, my dear children, and stand by it constantly and faithfully and I promise you the esteem of men and peace of heart upon earth, and heaven in eternity. For your amiable Saviour says to you, " he who shall acknowledge and glorify me before men, him will I acknowledge and glorify before my Father who is in heaven."

I am a christian and I make the resolution,
O my God ! always to remain constant, de-
spite the world ; without pride as without
weakness, without ostentation as without
fear, I am resolved to walk with a firm step,
in the way of your commandments. O
Mary ! my good Mother, obtain for me the
grace never to be ashamed of the gospel.



CHAPTER XII.

WHATEVER FAULTS WE MAY HAVE THE MIS-
FORTUNE TO COMMIT WE MUST NEVER DE-
SPAIR OF THE MERCY OF GOD

To conduct you by innocence to happiness has been my object, my children, in giving you my advice upon the means of perseverance. The means, as you have seen, consist in the constant recollection of your first communion, in praying often and with fervor, in frequently approaching the holy sacraments, in cherishing a tender devotion to the blessed Virgin, in carefully avoiding the occasions of sin, in never permitting yourself to read books which are dangerous to morals and faith, in flying bad company and in constantly and earnestly performing the duties of your religion. The most earnest desire of my heart is that you may preserve without stain the robe of innocence, the inestimable grace of your first communion; that you may say even to your latest hour, as the virtuous Indian, whom a missionary advised to make a con-

fession about a year after he had been baptised. "Confess! my Father, it is not necessary: can any one continue to sin after having received baptism?" and you "can any one sin after having made their first communion?" Yet if by any misfortune, you should forget your promises and drive your amiable Saviour from your heart by committing a mortal sin what should I say to you? What the Apostle St John said to his disciples, "My beloved, I have written all these things to the end that you may not sin; but if any one sin let him remember that we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the just, who is the propitiation for all our sins, and not only for all ours but for those of the whole world. "And I must add with him, if you wish not to sin, love not the world, nor the things of the world, because all that is in the world is concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life. Remember also that the last hour approaches; live then in our Lord, so that on the day of his coming you may not be confounded but full of joy and confidence. May the touching words of the Disciple, my beloved, remain engraved upon your heart until your latest sigh. Nevertheless I repeat, if you should forget them and lose your innocence, in the

name of God do not despair. Remember that repentance is the brother of innocence. After the shipwreck there is a plank of safety—this plank is penance. First then confess as soon as you can, and this for two reasons—*first*, that you may not run the risk of dying in that state. Alas! death may strike us any moment. “That is why,” said St. Bernard, that I cannot understand how any one can rest a quarter of an hour in a state of mortal sin.” *Secondly*, that you may not allow the disorder time to increase and become a habit. How many poor children would to-day be in the grace of God, had they followed these salutary counsels, whereas they now groan under the weight of chains which they cannot cast off. Beware that you do not follow their example; have recourse to the tribunal of penance as often as you shall fall. Fear nothing, you will always be received with open arms; accuse yourself with courage, confidence, patience and humility and all will be forgotten. And more, our Lord will cause you to find consolations in the humble acknowledgment of your weakness, much superior to those gross pleasures which accompany prevarication, and in his infinite wisdom he will find means of turning to your advantage even your falls. They will

render you more vigilant, more humble, more fervent in prayer, more earnest in mortifying yourself and in doing good, thus making, as it were, some amends to your amiable Saviour, and regaining lost time. The good Pastor will do still more for his stray sheep. If you do not quickly return to him, he will leave the rest of his flock and go after you; he will draw you to himself by inducing feelings of remorse and the remembrance, both sweet and bitter, of all that you have been, and all that you are, and by sending you lively and penetrating thoughts of your first communion he will prevent your falling into new excesses. In fine lassitude and disgust will arrest you, you will cast a look upon the past, and at the remembrance of your first communion, sighs will escape you and tears will flow from your eyes; the good Pastor will do the rest, and you will be saved. Be not discouraged, my dear children, whatever may be your wanderings, act towards your Lord as you would act towards your mother; more than once you have disobeyed her and afterwards been sorry for it; what have you done at such times? You throw yourself into her arms, express your sorrow for what you have done and promise to be better in future; she embraces you and all is over, and you are as

before the object of her tenderness and love. Ah ! nothing can cause the living heart of your Saviour more grief than a distrust of his mercy. See with what kind indulgence he has always received sinners. Magdalen a public sinner guilty of a thousand crimes, throws herself at his feet and washes them with her tears. "My daughter, go in peace; many sins are forgiven thee because thou hast loved much." See how, he pardoned Peter who had denied him three times. "Peter," he said, regarding him with love and that was all, not a word of reproach or of complaint. He would have pardoned Judas had Judas asked pardon of him. Thus will he pardon you, my dear children, whatever be your faults ! thus will he pardon all penitent sinners even to the end of the world. Can you ever want confidence in so good a father ? Can you ever make his mercy a plea for offending him. But all that I have told you of the goodness of your amiable Sav'our, towa'ds peni'ent sinners, seems as nothing when we have read the parable of the prodigal son. He spoke this parable in order to reassure sinners in all ages who should sincerely wish to return to him. Read it ; you will find it in the New Testament.

O my God ! my Saviour, my friend, my Father, most tender spouse of my soul shall I ever be so unfortunate as to forget you, to forget the holy promises of my first communion ! Ah ! I pray that you would rather call me to yourself now that I have the happiness to possess my innocence. But if ever I am unfortunate enough to forget you, give me, at least, the grace never to despair of your mercy. Yes, my God ! whatever may be the number and enormity of my faults, I will remember the day of my innocence, I will remember my first communion, I will remember all your former favors, this remembrance will reanimate my courage, and I will cast myself at your feet in the sacred tribunal of reconciliation ; I will present you my wounds, my tears, and my infirmities, and you will have pity upon me. O my God ! you will receive me as the father of the prodigal received his penitent child, the angels will rejoice at my return, peace will descend into my heart and I shall again become your child.

O Mary ! my good and tender mother, obtain for me the grace, ever to preserve without stain the robe of innocence ; but if I have the misfortune to offend my God, refuge of sinners ! abandon me not ; deign

to ask the grace of my conversion and you will obtain it, and I will bless you eternally in Heaven, with my amiable Saviour, to whom be all praise, all honor and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost now and forever. Amen.

